

2018 Week 49: The Week Ending Saturday,
December 8th

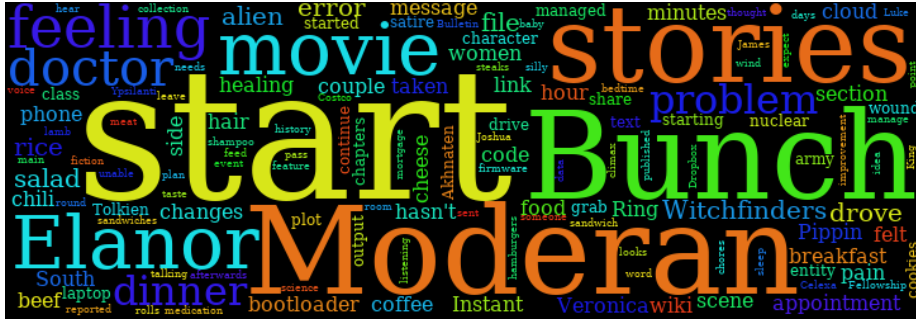


Figure 1: Word Cloud

Sunday

Last night none of us had much energy and Elanor was pretty miserable. We had an unimpressive dinner of cold cuts, sardines, cheese, crackers, and rolls and tried to help Elanor get some rest. Infant Tylenol helped. I was also not feeling well; I seem to have a mild fever and I've been feeling wrung out. So today involved a couple of naps. No one made it to Mass. Grace and Veronica did manage to get out to a social event at the church. Grace also went out to meet a couple of friends who are in town. I fried myself a couple of eggs but haven't been very hungry, or up to much cooking. Elanor's rash is healing up. I gave her a bath and she fell asleep in the tub while I was holding her. So she's currently having a nap herself.

Tonight I think we will have lamb steaks and salad and an Instant Pot full of basmati rice with tomatoes, then watch “The Witchfinders,” the next episode of the 11th season. We have a tricky morning in store tomorrow. Grace has to be at a doctor’s appointment at 8:00 in Brighton. So she needs to get up and out early. If I want a ride to work afterwards I’ll have to go with her.

Monday

Well, we didn't manage to watch "The Witchfinders." The kids weren't really focused on getting chores done. But I did get my beard trimmed, with some assistance from Joshua and Sam, and read Joshua, Sam, and Pippin a bit more of "The Ring Goes South." The Sword that was Broken has been re-forged! The Fellowship has finally left Rivendell! But just barely. Then Grace read us chapter 2 of Luke. The kids were not very good at paying attention, but we got through it, and sent them to bed. Elanor is still healing up from the nasty rash associated with Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease. It looks worse as it gets crusty, but it is actually healing. She had a better night's sleep, which meant that we had a better night's sleep, although it was too brief.

I got up at six. Well, shortly after six. I got a bath and tried Grace's homemade shampoo again. Unfortunately it coats my hair in such a way that it sticks badly to itself. I can't even pull my fingers through it. It feels kind of like taffy. So I had to wash it again with a regular shampoo. Apparently this homemade shampoo works really well for Veronica, but not so well on Grace's hair or my hair. I'm still trying to figure out what I should use daily or weekly. I haven't had this problem in many years since my hair hasn't been this long for... twenty years? I can't recall for sure. We got out and went to Tim Horton's for a small coffee (for me) and a small tea (for Grace) and two breakfast sandwiches, and hit the road for Brighton and Grace's obstetrics appointment. She had written it on the calendar as an 8:00 appointment. I think it was actually 8:30, which meant that despite the extra delay to make my hair combable, and a few minutes spent sitting in heavy traffic, we made it on time. Then after her appointment, Grace dropped me off at my office. This doing-everything-with-one-car is quite a pain but we will have to make it work for now.

Bootloader Improvements

I had a pretty uneventful work day. I found some improvements to make to the bootloader — we had a problem with a unit in manufacturing that had been programmed with a bad data file. I improved the error-checking in the bootloader and the error reporting in the EEPROM configuration tool so that if we wind up with some kind of similar bad data file in the future, the bootloader will detect the error and report it to the EEPROM configuration tool, which will display an error message to the user, warning about bad data. This is something I try to do when I can — if we come across some case where there is an error like this, even if it isn't a bug in my code *per se*, I try to figure out how that error in the process could have been caught and reported, and then implement those changes if they aren't too risky or difficult.

Grace had to come out and get me, and arrived a bit before 7:00, and then she had to go to a meeting at 8:00. She needed to eat something first, so we stopped for a quick bite at the Coney Island on Jackson. She had a bowl of lemon rice soup, which we hope won't give her heartburn, and I had a small order of chili

cheese fries. These are things that their kitchen can bring out almost instantly. Then I drove home, got the mail, jumped out of the car, pulled out my flashlight, and walked up the driveway to our house while she drove away. She's going to be a bit late, but maybe not too late.

The kids had left all the lights on in the garage again, so I turned those off, then went inside. They had not taken the trash or recycling bins down to Crane Road, so I told them to do that. They are working on it now. The plan was to feed them leftovers, but it looks like they already heated up some leftover hamburgers and made pancakes. I think they used the pancakes as buns for the hamburgers. An odd choice, but — hey, they seem to be mostly fed.

Ideas for the Old House

Grace is talking to a nonprofit in Saginaw about our old house. We might consider donating it — essentially, continuing to pay the mortgage, and just the mortgage, while they occupy it and take over all maintenance and utility expenses. It's not necessarily ideal, but it should help make our monthly expenses related to the old house *predictable*, which would be a big improvement over 2018. And there might be a way to deduct our mortgage payments as a charitable contribution. We will look into that. It wouldn't really help us until we paid our 2019 taxes in 2020. It may be a bit of a long shot. Grace will meet with them on Friday.

Epidydimitis

Since I'm kind of compulsively confessional here, I should probably mention that I seem to have developed a mild case of epididymitis. I've never experienced anything quite like it before. The cause is unclear. Apparently some viral infections can cause it. I think it's also possible that between the Celexa, which has sexual side effects, and the Flomax, which affects the prostate, and my new blood pressure medication, I've simply come across a less common side effect. Some sources list testicular pain as a reported side effect, and I've found some Celexa users on message boards talking about symptoms that sound exactly like mine. Fortunately after resting most of the day on Sunday, it seems to be feeling considerably better. If it doesn't go away completely I'll arrange to see my doctor.

Barring surprises, Grace will deliver the new baby by c-section in 11 days!

And... the evening is ending with a kid melting down because his siblings are demanding that he do chores I was told he had done, but didn't. A second is having a screaming tantrum over food I was told he had eaten, when in fact he hadn't eaten anything — hence the tantrum. Sigh.

Tuesday

I managed to calm down the kids. I got them to get through their chores. I had to rub Benjamin's back and talk him down so he stopped demanding hamburgers that didn't exist, and he was finally willing to listen to the other food options that I had been offering him. So I wound up making him a quick omelet with cheese and sliced chicken breast. He ate most of that, and then Elanor ate the rest, and then we had a story.

“The Ring Goes South,” Continued

I read more of “The Ring Goes South.” We read about the weeks between leaving Rivendell and preparing to go over the mountains via the Redhorn Gate. These events are highly compressed in the movie, and it's interesting how bits and pieces from different conversations are combined and elided. Some of the elements of the movie scenes are rendered much more dramatically, such as the flyover by the *crebain*. In the book we read:

‘Lie flat and still!’ hissed Aragorn, pulling Sam down into the shade of a holly-bush; for a whole regiment of birds had broken away suddenly from the main host, and came, flying low, straight towards the ridge. Sam thought they were a kind of crow of large size. As they passed overhead, in so dense a throng that their shadow followed them darkly over the ground below, one harsh croak was heard.

In the movie we hear more than “one harsh croak” — the scene is quite noisy as the animated crows fly very low over the Fellowship. In the book, there's a second “flyover” of some kind that happens late at night:

It was the cold chill hour before the first stir of dawn, and the moon was low. Frodo looked up at the sky. Suddenly he saw or felt a shadow pass over the high stars, as if for a moment they faded and then flashed out again. He shivered.

‘Did you see anything pass over?’ he whispered to Gandalf, who was just ahead.

‘No, but I felt it, whatever it was,’ he answered. ‘It may be nothing, only a wisp of thin cloud.’

‘It was moving fast then,’ muttered Aragorn, ‘and not with the wind.’

In the movie, some of that dialogue is borrowed for the *crebain* scene; Gimli is given the “wisp of cloud” line, which makes him look a bit foolish because seconds later, he's proven wrong in dramatic fashion. In the book, Gandalf is the one who reassures Frodo that “it may be nothing,” although he is wise enough to trust his feeling and suspect otherwise. In *The Treason of Isengard: The History of The Lord of the Rings, Part Two*, Christopher Tolkien says that the thing passing overhead is probably a Nazgûl traveling on a winged mount, later called a “fell beast.” I think that's what Tolkien intended to suggest, although

this is not really confirmed anywhere else in the text or in Tolkien's letters.

Baby, You Can't Drive My Car

When Grace tried to drive home from her meeting, she found that she was entirely unable to start my car. She finally had to get a towtruck via roadside assistance. The driver didn't do anything special, he just tried to start it himself a few times, and it started. This is becoming a real problem, as we are down to one car and we don't have any immediate prospect of getting a different car. I can always start my car after a few tries. Sometimes it takes five or six. There's some kind of a loose contact in the ignition switch, or something like that. I've never been completely unable to start it after a few tries. But that keeps happening to Grace.

This morning we were pretty tired because we got up so early Monday morning. So I wasn't able to get up and into the tub all that early. But we managed to get up and out and I got myself a small coffee and Grace a small tea at Joe and Rosie Creamery, along with some day-old pastries.

A Big Code Merge

I had a pretty productive work day — more revisions to the MX firmware. After refining some of my error-checking and reporting code until I was satisfied with it, I tackled a big merge, merging all my recent work into the head. That took a while and there were some conflicts and confusing file histories to sort out, but I'm very satisfied that it is done. I'm wrapping up a "final" firmware version for all our current products. This will be "final" in the sense that I don't have any outstanding changes planned and any requests in the queue are considered low-priority "might be nice" things. I don't plan to make further changes unless there are bugs reported, customer feature requests we can satisfy with firmware changes, or we do some kind of hardware change that necessitates supporting additional hardware options.

Grace is in the parking lot waiting for me. She was having trouble getting the car started again. I was sitting here thinking that it might be a good idea for her to ask Joshua to come out and try starting it. I did not send her a text message about this, but I thought about it. Then she sent me a text message telling me that she had asked him to come out and try starting it. It started for him on the first try.

Again, I don't know what to make of this. It would be obviously silly for me to say "it only likes men to start it," or "it's jealous of you so it won't start for you." That would be silly, but yet the evidence does seem to point in that direction. I've watched her try to start it and she's just twisting the key the way I am. I have no idea what she is doing differently.

We're going to head to Costco. It'll have to be a pretty small load of groceries because I don't have very much cash on hand this week. I'll need to keep it

under \$100.

Ten days to go!

Wednesday

Well, we didn't keep it under \$100. But it wasn't too much over. We got a bunch of fruit, more bread rolls, sandwich meat, eggs, and some top round. Grace was quite tired by the time we got home and her tiredness seemed to be contagious. She had put some ground bison in the refrigerator to thaw, but it was still partially frozen. So Veronica made a beef stew out of the top round and potatoes in the Instant Pot and it was pretty good, although I was reminded why the top round is cheaper than other cuts of meat — it tends to be kind of dry and chewy. Grace just had a cup of the broth. We struggled to get the kids to stay quiet because our housemate's kids have all come down with a virus. It's probably the same thing we had last weekend. Elanor is clearly feeling better, and her little blisters are healing, although they look terrible.

We didn't have a bedtime story last night. Grace doesn't have any appointments today, so I took the car the way I usually do, but I'll have to be home so she can take Pippin to his religious education class this evening. The bison should be thawed and I should have a little bit more time to cook this evening, so I'll attempt to make chili.

Moderan, Continued

This morning I had a toasted bagel with peanut butter and a coffee at Joe and Rosie Creamery and read a little bit more of *Moderan*. I've finished the three main sections of the books, and I'm reading the final section, a collection of previously uncollected Moderan stories that don't fit into the main story arc. For example, in "A Little at All Times," Bunch describes a sort of alternate eschatology in which the metal and flesh cyborg people of Moderan and their invincible strongholds are ironically brought down not by a contagion that attacks their remaining "flesh-strips," but by a kind of metal-eating dust, perhaps a nanotechnological weapon as hypothesized by Stanislaw Lem in *The Invincible* and *Fiasco*. And a story like "A Little Girl's Spring Day in Moderan" is very similar to another Moderan story, "A Husband's Share," but it's a little more blatantly naughty, which might explain why it hasn't been collected elsewhere.

There are some odd inconsistencies between the newly published stories at the end of *Moderan* and the older stories. Several make reference to "Olderan," a location that hasn't "modernized" like Moderan. But in the newly published stories it is spelled "Olderrun." I think the "Olderrun" spelling is probably an offhand reference to "riverrun," the first word of Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, which begins like this:

riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth

Castle and Environs.

This list of stories needs to be updated, and it has obvious gaps; for example, it doesn't list the story "The Escaping" which appeared in the *Dangerous Visions* anthology. "The Escaping" isn't in the *Moderan* collection. And it hasn't been updated to show the stories that were added to this 2018 edition of *Moderan*. Matthew Cheney's blog post suggests that Bunch may have published 200 non-science fiction stories before selling his first science fiction story to *If* magazine, and that only 1/3 or so of Bunch's stories have been collected.

It's disappointing to realize that there doesn't seem to be much scholarship on Bunch and his work. There doesn't seem to be a self-designated Bunch "expert." No one seems to have stepped up to be his biographer. I don't think that I'm up to the job, but it seems like the least I can do is to track down his other collection, simply entitled *BUNCH!*, and do what I can with my modest online voice to promote his work. His stories are difficult and dark and "arty," and not all of them are great. Cheney writes:

It's been said that when Bunch was publishing one story after another in *Amazing*, *Fantastic*, *If*, *Galaxy*, and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* during the 1960s and '70s that readers were outraged — they felt the stories were deliberately opaque, that he was mocking them and their desire for linear narratives with clear plots and sympathetic characters.

He was.

But they can be quite startling in the stark brutality of the vision of human nature they expose through satire. As Swift did, Bunch is giving me — and you — permission to write satire that truly goes "beyond the pale," which is where satire should go, because anything in this hell-world that *can* be destroyed by satire — *must* be. He and his work should not be forgotten. And the best way to remember him would be to go blow up something horrible but commonplace — so commonplace that we no longer even *see* it for what it really is — with words.

Dropbox

It looks like Dropbox may have disabled a feature so that I can no longer share files by link with a non-pro account. Or at least they may have partially disabled this feature. The links that I create now seem to go to the preview page on **dropbox.com** instead of downloading the file. But there might be an easy workaround, changing the **?dl=0** at the end of the link to **?dl=1**. Can it be that easy? I'm testing it by sending the link to someone overseas, and I guess I'll find out. And I'm wondering if this will affect a link I shared a year ago; the files are still there waiting for my editor friend to access them at the end of the year.

Thursday

Yes, it seems to be that easy. This morning I got confirmation that the `?dl=1` tweak worked to share a file with someone in Germany.

I had to leave early last night to take Pippin to his religious education class. Unfortunately during the whole 5:00 hour (and the next couple of hours, honestly), traffic on I-94 tends to be badly backed up due to huge numbers of cars trying to get on using the State Street ramps. So it took me twice as long to get home as usual. I picked up Pippin and got him to his class at about 6:11, eleven minutes late. It was the best I was able to do. I then hung around the church with the other parents and read more of *Moderan*. I should only need another quiet hour or two to finish the book.

Grace and the kids made chili and mashed sweet potatoes while I was out. Pippin's class was done at 7:15 and we got home about 7:30. We ate with our houseguest and her children. The chili was quite spicy, which was a bit of a problem for the youngest children, but it was delicious. Grace is trying some papaya enzymes to help with her digestion, and some burdock tea, which to me smells like apple cores and tastes about like you'd expect the root of some random weed to taste. But the enzymes and/or tea seemed to help her last night and she didn't have terrible heartburn that made her feel like she needed to — what was the phrase she used? I think it was “vomit fire.”

Speaking of fire, I wound up going down a rabbit hole yesterday. I was listening to an episode of the “We Hate Movies” podcast about *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. I was remembering Sarah Conner's dream sequence, in which we see her annihilated by a nuclear blast. This got me thinking about *The Day After*, the TV movie about nuclear war, and reading about the story of *The Day After* I realized that in my memory I had mixed up the plot of a later movie, *Special Bulletin*, with *The Day After*. I remember that the explosion sequences in *The Day After* used a lot of stock footage, and so the climax of *Special Bulletin* is more firmly embedded in my memory. As it is a story about an act of nuclear terrorism, rather than a nuclear war, *Special Bulletin* now seems to me like the more plausible movie, and at 105 minutes instead of 126 minutes, faster-paced and more engaging.

***Doctor Who* Series 11, Episode 8: “The Witchfinders”**

Because we got through dinner pretty early, and the kids did a good job cleaning up, I got out my laptop to watch “The Witchfinders,” last week's episode of *Doctor Who*. We just watched it on the laptop in our bedroom, so that Grace could prop herself up in bed. It was occasionally a little hard to hear, since Elanor kept trying to grab the laptop, and when she wasn't trying to grab the laptop, she was wandering around the room trying to grab my cell phone. We had subtitles on, but I missed a few lines.

This one wasn't bad, and there were things about it I enjoyed. But overall I felt

that the plot arc, involving an imprisoned alien army, was a bit over-complicated. Alan Cumming as King James was entertaining, and does “steal the show” as other reviewers have noted, but that isn’t necessarily a good thing. I kept asking myself what role his character actually played in the episode. I am left with the feeling that he was added to the script to pad it out, as the story could have been told entirely without him. The climax got too silly for my taste.

Afterwards, I felt like there were some unanswered questions. Does the Morax army comprise one entity, or many? Are they tiny, like the little blob of mud-stuff that The Doctor catches in a bottle? How does that little blob relate to the mud-tentacles and the giant tentacle with a face we see in the climax?

Why would the alien army be imprisoned on a remote backwater like Earth, anyway? If someone knocks down the remaining stump of that tree, will they be freed again?

Are we meant to conclude that the grandmother character, Old Mother Twiston, was also infected with an alien entity, like Becka Savage, before the start of the events in the show, and that’s why she and her granddaughter Willa recited the pagan-sounding verses to each other? If not, why did the alien entities use the same verses later? Or were the grandmother and granddaughter actually witches? Or were they just kind of “goth?” Why did the grandmother die so quickly, after about ten seconds in the water? Maybe the alien entity inside her just faked her “death,” so they would bury her, leaving the alien entity with a body to inhabit, rather than burn her?

I almost want to watch this one again and see if some of these things become clearer. But I’m not sure they will. Once again, I get the feeling that I’ve given these details more thought than the writing team, which is frustrating.

This review by Emily Asher-Perrin on Tor’s web site sums up my feelings about the King James character pretty well:

Speaking of King James, Alan Cumming is a treasure as always... but he seems like he’s appearing in an entirely different episode. He’s far too fun for the subject matter being tackled, and while it’s great to watch him flirt and ponder and come out the other side a different sort of man, it’s hard to imagine why that needed to be any part of a story about witch hunting, or the pain and suffering that it brought to communities of women throughout history.

But it also makes a much bigger and more important point: the critique of misogyny embodied in the history of witch hunts ought to be the *point* of this episode, but the episode just isn’t pointed enough to skewer its target:

...at the end of the day, this is an insult to the very real women who lost their lives being accused of witchcraft. Those women weren’t killed because another woman was scared that she was being taken over by “Satanic forces.” They died because they practiced earlier forms of medicine and midwifery... because these women frightened

men who could not bear to see women with a modicum of power that they did not possess for themselves.

And:

This episode, titled “The Witchfinders” has nothing to do with the persecution caused by witch hunts at all. Not really. It doesn’t demonstrate an understanding of the power dynamics that created it, or any amount of care for why those women were actually killed. It’s used as a handy backdrop for a hackneyed alien plot about an army who possess bodies somehow using mud.

Amen.

Breakfast

Grace and I got a decent night’s sleep. Elanor’s sores continue to heal up, and she slept pretty well too. Grace needs the car today, so we managed to get up and out and have breakfast at Harvest Moon Café. It’s been forever since Grace and I have had breakfast out together. We talked about critical and important things like the identity of that weird sidekick of Lando Calrissian in the old *Star Wars* movies. I had to look him up — his name is Nien Nunb.

After breakfast I drove to my office, using Grace’s key, and left the car running while she took the wheel. Apparently I managed to leave my cell phone in the car, unfortunately. Grace has another “non-stress test,” a session where they will monitor her and the baby. We don’t expect any problems, as so far they have all gone well.

Eight days to go!

I just hope she’ll be able to start the car afterwards.

***Akhnaten* by Philip Glass, Again**

On the drive in after breakfast, I played the concluding part of Act II, Scene 3, and Act II, Scene 4 of *Akhnaten*, the Philip Glass opera, and tried to share some of my fascination with this opera with Grace. I’m still listening to it, and listening to no other music. The more I listen to *Akhnaten*, the more I find to be fascinated by: the complex rhythms of the “Dance” section, and the introduction and recapitulation of motifs in “Hymn,” as simple, plaintive melodies are taken up again and again by different instruments and woven into the evolving piece, and the eerie-sounding, narrow, near-dissonant harmonies between voice and instruments — not to mention the stunning beauty of the voices themselves. I would dearly love to see this work performed one day.

I’m still having a vague, hard-to-pinpoint ache in my right testicle. It feels more normal than it did on Sunday. I can’t identify any lumps. But it also seems a little bit larger than it used to be. So I’m not quite sure what to do — wait

longer, see if the pain goes away, or schedule a doctor appointment, which might not be until after Christmas? Go to urgent care?

Grace called me at 1:30 because my phone alarm had gone off, reminding me to take my blood pressure medication. Except that the phone is with her, not me. But I had just taken the pill, because even though my phone isn't in the building, I heard the alarm go off anyway. In my head.

Friday

Last night Grace was unable to come and pick me up from work, because once again she couldn't start my car. My co-worker Patrick was kind enough to give me a ride home. I got in the car to try starting it, and of course it started up for me on the first try. We continue to be baffled by just why this is such a problem. For dinner Veronica had cooked the rest of the beef in the Instant Pot to make something slightly akin to Mongolian beef, although it seemed like she must have left out an ingredient or two. We ate that with leftover salad and rice. We continue to buy and cook red meat for two or more dinners a week while Grace finishes up this pregnancy, and we probably will continue with the beef and lamb steaks and burgers for a few weeks while she recovers, but I expect to move back to eating less animal protein in the new year.

For our bedtime story, we tried to catch up on the chapters in Luke we had unfortunately missed, so we wound up reading four chapters of Luke, Grace and I alternating chapters. It was unfortunate to try to rush through, though, especially when Jesus starts preaching in parables, because they need to be unpacked and discussed, and we just couldn't do that last night.

Grace canceled (or had canceled on her) all the things she needed to do with the car on Friday, so I was able to take the car in the morning. I had a pretty ordinary work day. I'm starting to dig into some LabVIEW code to drive a four-to-two optical switch. This has six fiber optic cables connected to it and three control pins, so there are eight settings. The settings configure it to send the inputs to the outputs. I think it's indifferent to whether you use it with four inputs and two outputs, or two inputs and four outputs. We're going to use it to route light from three different lasers to one output, which will feed the instrument we're calibrating.

After work I made my usual Friday evening trip to Costco and brought home some stew beef, some lamb steaks, sandwich rolls, bagels, celery, apples, blueberries, salad, precooked beets, boxed and canned coconut milk, butter, pasta, and a few other items including food for our Friday dinner. I decided to bring home two cheese pizzas. The kids had asked for cookies for dessert, so I picked out a box of Tillamook ice cream sandwiches with peppermint ice cream and dark chocolate waffles for the cookies. Sam made a pot of rice with both basmati and brown rice, which was an unexpectedly good combination, and we put together another bagged salad topped with garbanzo beans. Veronica has been experimenting with chia seed pudding, and made with the canned coconut milk and a little

sweetener it is quite good. So with the rice and the chia seed pudding and salad we had things we could feed Elanor, who isn't really supposed to eat dairy, because she shows signs of a dairy allergy, although she did manage to grab a mouthful of pizza when our backs were turned. The ice cream sandwiches turned out to be particularly tasty.

After dinner the kids would not really stay very focused on cleanup so we didn't wind up watching any videos or reading anything at bedtime, and despite this, still wound up getting to bed very late, because Grace and I stayed up quite a while talking.

Saturday

I had hoped to get up at 6:30 and get the car to the Honda dealership by eight. That didn't happen. Instead Grace and I both left the house on a series of errands some time after noon. She was kind enough to assemble a coffee drink for me out of our nasty instant coffee and coconut milk. Grace drove, since I still don't know my way around the Ypsilanti area very well. We went to the Honda dealership, but it wasn't a big surprise to hear that they wouldn't even have time to diagnose the problem before they closed at 2:00. Apparently they mostly do only small jobs on Saturdays, like oil changes. So we have a time slot scheduled for Wednesday morning at 8:00. I don't want to spend the money but since we're down to one car, Grace absolutely must be able to start it.

After we left the Honda dealership, Grace drove us around the corner to the Ypsilanti food coöp to pick up some things I couldn't get at Costco. We bought a package of newborn-sized diapers, some nutritional yeast, two bottles of olive oil, and a package of molasses cookies for Grace's go bag. It's become our tradition for her to eat molasses cookies after a birth. I also grabbed an egg salad sandwich, which was delicious.

Before we left I had been looking at Twitter and noticed that there was a puppet show on offer at an Ypsilanti performance space — in particular, a puppet show based on the original *Star Trek*. That sounded too good to pass up, so we went to get out a little bit of cash so that I could take the two oldest kids this evening. Grace drove around to find the location so I'd know where it was when I brought the kids back. It's very close to the strip club. It's not in the greatest neighborhood, but I guess that's where there is affordable space for the arts in Ypsilanti.

An Intimate Examination

As we headed back home, I talked with Grace about the fact that I was still having that unexplained pain in my testicle. We decided that since it had been a week, it really didn't seem like something I should just assume would go away anymore. So Grace drove me to the urgent care in Saline while she went next door to the Brewed Awakenings café. I had almost no time to wait before they

examined me. They couldn't find anything wrong by feel, and the next step was an ultrasound. So they sent me to the emergency room at St. Joe's.

So, this meant we spent the next four hours or so at St. Joe's. It took a while but I eventually got the ultrasound. And they found — wait for it — nothing. So I left with the contact information for a urologist and a recommendation to take over-the-counter painkillers and give it another week to see if the pain goes away on its own. My leading theories now are that it's (1) a weird lingering effect of the virus from a week ago, or (2) a rare side effect of Celexa or one of the other medications I'm taking. But I'm glad to rule out possible severe problems.

Unfortunately, we didn't leave the emergency room until after seven, so we blew our chance to go to the puppet show this evening. We're back home and trying to carry on with our plans to make latkes for dinner. It's going slowly.

Media Discussed This Week

This list does not include books, chapters of books, or other works that I only mentioned briefly in the text above.

- *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien, Book 2, Chapter 3: "The Ring Goes South"
- *Moderan* by David R. Bunch (New York Review Books Classics 2018 edition)
- *Doctor Who* Series 11, Episode 8: "The Witchfinders"
- *Akhnaten* by Philip Glass

Pittsfield Township, Michigan

The Week Ending Saturday, December 8th, 2018

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